

# Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary

## Research Vessel *Auk*



**Hull:** Aluminum (Marine Grade 5083);  
Hydrofoil-assisted catamaran

**LOA:** 50'; **Beam:** 19'  
**Draft:** less than 5.5'

**Crew:** 2; **Science Party:** 12 for  
day trips, 4-6 for overnight

**Contracted:** September 2004

**Launched:** April 4, 2006

**Power:** Twin Cummins 484 HP  
diesel engines w/ props

**Top speed:** 28 kts

**Sanctuary cruise speed:** 20 kts

**Range:** 400nm

**N**oAA's new research vessel, assigned to the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, was designed to meet the research and monitoring needs for this offshore site, located at the mouth of Massachusetts Bay in the Gulf of Maine. The R/V *Auk* provides a stable platform for applied research to support ecosystem-based management. Now, for the first time in the sanctuary's history, researchers have year-round access to all parts of this 842-square-mile marine protected area, enabling them to develop a better understanding of ecosystem dynamics.

The sanctuary is located approximately 17 miles east of Scituate, Massachusetts, the *Auk*'s homeport, and 25 miles east of Boston. Nearly the size of the state of Rhode Island, the sanctuary harbors a diverse assemblage of marine life from majestic whales and historically important Atlantic cod to an abundant array of plankton. Numerous shipwrecks, some historically significant, sit on the seafloor. With the *Auk*, the sanctuary can better fulfill its mission to protect the biological diversity, ecological integrity and cultural integrity of the area while facilitating compatible uses.

The vessel incorporates special design features to facilitate research. It can deploy and retrieve scientific equipment with its 750-lb capacity oceanographic winch, hydraulic A-frame and articulated knuckle crane. The vessel serves as an ideal dive platform for conducting *in situ* research. Bow thrusters aid in positioning the vessel, especially important when maneuvering remotely operated vehicles and side scan sonar towfish. The R/V *Auk* also offers capabilities as an emergency response asset and for on-the-water enforcement patrols.

The vessel was named the *Auk*, honoring the now-extinct seabird that was once plentiful on Stellwagen Bank. The Great Auk's migration took it from summer breeding locations on or near Labrador, Newfoundland, and points north and east, to winter feeding grounds on Stellwagen Bank, Georges Bank, and along the New England and Mid-Atlantic states. While the Great Auk cannot be restored, it serves as a stark reminder that humans do have a significant impact on the ecosystem and that we must be vigilant in protecting the resources of the sanctuary.

